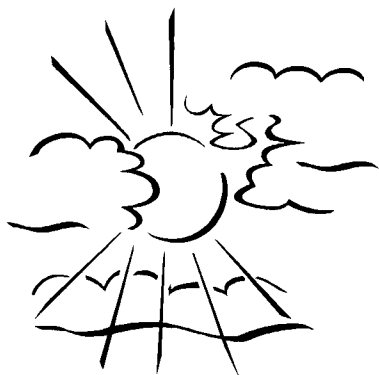


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\*Important story at this spot

# **Articles in Today's Clips**

## **Friday, March 17, 2006**

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Michigan

## Reports say slain boy was thriving

March 17, 2006

BY JACK KRESNAK  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A state adoption worker who visited Ricky Holland and his family four months before he disappeared said the boy was thriving with the parents now accused of murdering him and clearly "loves them dearly," according to reports released Thursday.

The March 2005 report, written by a state Department of Human Services worker, was among additional files obtained by the Free Press through a Freedom of Informational Act request for records regarding services provided to Ricky and three younger siblings who initially were placed through foster care with Tim and Lisa Holland by the state.

On three occasions -- Jan. 8, 2004; Feb. 6, 2004, and March 1, 2005 -- DHS licensing worker Shantelle Hawkins filed routine requests for information from foster-care, adoption and Child Protective Services workers to make sure all was well with the Hollands.

A preliminary examination for the Hollands, who are charged with murder and first-degree child abuse in Ricky's death, continues today in 55th District Court in Ingham County. Testimony is expected from a police investigator who interrogated Lisa Holland, 33, about Ricky's disappearance in July.

The boy's skeletal remains were found Jan. 27 several miles south of the Hollands' home in Williamston after Ricky's father, Tim Holland, 37, led police to the boy's body. Police say both parents have blamed each other in his death.

Ingham County prosecutors are trying to prove that the Hollands mentally and physically abused Ricky for more than three years after he had been placed in their care by the Department of Human Services in October 2000.

According to the department document dated Jan. 8, 2004, Hawkins asked Child Protective Services investigator Loretta Loheiser to answer to questions on a form.

"Lisa is very helpful, willing to do whatever is needed for her foster children to enhance their development," she wrote.

A report from DHS adoption worker Melissa Sewell dated March 8, 2005, said she visited the children quarterly and had last seen them Feb. 18.

Asked about the Hollands' strengths and weaknesses, Sewell said, "Strengths are the Hollands support each other with the kids. ... Also, they meet the kids' needs and provide a healthy environment. Weaknesses are Lisa's need to learn additional skills to manage so many young children."

Contact **JACK KRESNAK** at 313-223-4544 or [jkresnak@freepress.com](mailto:jkresnak@freepress.com).

# Grandmother Charged After Child Drugged

By Anu Prakash

Clasek@W

WXYZ-TV

Web produced by Sarah Morgan

March 17, 2006

Earlier this week prosecutors charged a woman with drugging her 12-year-old nephew. Friday, the boy's grandmother also faced charges.

Jan Catton, a Warren grandmother, was charged with 7 counts of child abuse, running a drug house and keeping a house of prostitution.

Investigators said it was in her home where her grandson was injected with heroin by his aunt, Jaqueline Vuich. She was charged with serious drug crimes earlier this week.

According to investigators, Catton let her daughters stay at her home where they abused drugs and had people coming to the house for prostitution while 7 children were living there.

Police also said she would ask the children to gather drug paraphernalia and syringes and dispose of them in the sewer.

Catton told the judge that she had done nothing wrong and was not guilty. She asked for a low personal bond, but that's not what she got.

Catton's daughter, Jamie Nash, said, "My mother wasn't running a prostitute house. She didn't know about the drugs. And she took very well care of those babies. She shouldn't be charged and how her bond is \$300,000, I have no idea. She's completely innocent."

Jan Catton worked on the line for Chrysler for 13 years and has no criminal history.

# Father's account

Friday, March 17, 2006

By CRYSTAL HARMON and JERRY NUNN  
BAY CITY TIMES WRITERS

From the witness stand Thursday, Monique Yost's father described her as impulsive and tough to control, but fondly recalled the last time he saw her alive.

"She sat on my lap before I went to work and told me she loved me and I told her I loved her," Lonny W. Yost said of the 7-year-old girl who died of an overdose of an antidepressant medication.

Lonny's ex-wife, Donna A. Yost, is charged with murder for the death of the child on Oct. 10, 1999. Lonny and Donna were married for 13 years. Since Monique's death, the couple has divorced, but now live together in Pinconning.

Lonny Yost, a prosecution witness, described some of Monique's problems with bed-wetting and leaving the house without permission. He also said Monique had seemed sad in the month before her death, mentioning three times that she wanted to be with her grandmother, who was dead. Chief Assistant Bay County Prosecutor Kurt C. Asbury asked Yost why he hadn't mentioned that six years ago, during an evidence hearing in the case.

"At the time, I was distraught, and then things just come back to me," Yost said. "All I can tell you is what I know."

Lonny Yost also testified to being "dumbfounded" when he came home to an ambulance taking Monique the day she died and that the pills found in the upstairs room three days after her death were discovered because of dog urine leaking through the ceiling.

Asked about the relationship between Monique and Donna, Lonny said they were "always saying 'I love you' to each other."

"They'd toss empty cigarette packs at each other, do colorings together once in a while, go up to Created for Caring for meals," he said.

Jurors listened intently to Lonny Yost's testimony and in the end, through 18th Circuit Court Judge William J. Caprathe, asked nearly two dozen questions of their own. Most clarified earlier testimony. But not all.

"Why would people go to the room upstairs after Monique's death?" Caprathe asked.

"Probably to smoke their marijuana or whatever," Yost said.

Also testifying on Thursday was Dr. Michael Davison, who recounted an emergency room visit 23 years ago, when Donna's oldest daughter, Roxanne Davis, was treated for an overdose of Benedryl at the age of 21 months.

"This certainly could have been a fatal overdose," Davison said, but treatment, including induced vomiting and administration of charcoal to filter out toxins, stabilized the child.

During his testimony, Lonny Yost recounted discovering a bottle of the anti-depressant Imipramine - the drug that caused Monique's overdose - in an upstairs room three days after her death.

He said a couple of neighbors, Mike Dedge and Mary Gomez, were over early that morning having coffee with him and Donna, and he went to a room upstairs to investigate the source of

urine dripping through the ceiling. The dog, he said, was to blame. And on his way downstairs, he said, he discovered the medication.

"I didn't notice until I stepped on one and heard a crunch, and looked down to see what it was and saw all those pills," Yost said.

Dedge and Gomez have testified they had been to that room several times between Monique's death and that day, and the pills weren't there. They also said neither were at the house when the pills were found.

Lonny Yost disputed that claim, claiming dog urine dripping on Gomez' shoulder caused his investigation upstairs.

He claimed the empty vial that contained the drugs was lying in the doorway along with the pills and said Dedge handled the vial before police were called.

Dedge had testified no vial was at the scene when he was there and police photographs of the scene failed to show an empty bottle. But on the stand Thursday Lonny Yost said he thought he saw the vial's image at the edge of the photograph.

"My God, I think you're right," said Czuprynski.

Lonny Yost said he believed that Monique was still taking the medication, "being weaned" off of it, but also said that Donna had told him she'd disposed of the remaining pills.

"She said that she thought she had throw'd them away in the garbage," Lonny Yost said.

But he said Monique had a habit of picking things such as clothes or toys out of the trash.

The 16 jurors, 12 of whom will decide the case, also heard testimony on Thursday from Dr. Kanu Virani, the forensic pathologist who performed Monique's autopsy.

Virani said the initial exam determined no cause of death, nor did the initial report from the Michigan State Police Toxicology lab. A second toxicologist report however convinced Virani the cause of Monique's death was "acute Imipramine intoxication."

"Based on the amount found in the blood I realized it was a much greater quantity than the human body could handle and I determined that to be the cause of death," Virani said.

"Did you come to a conclusion regarding the cause of death?" asked Asbury.

"This was classified as homicide," Virani said.

Virani said Monique ingested 90 to 100 10-milligram tablets at least four hours prior to her death.

The toxicology report suggested 30 tablets had been ingested, four to eight hours prior to Monique's death.

Czuprynski's objections were overruled when Asbury questioned the forensic pathologist about the suicide theory.

"To my knowledge," Virani said, suicide has never been classified as the cause of death of a 7-year-old child.

# Parents could face charges for leaving kids alone

By: Ray Kisonas  
Monroe News

story updated March 17, 2006 11:36AM

Criminal charges might be filed against a Temperance couple after they left their two young children home alone while they went to at least two Toledo-area bars.

The couple's 5-year-old boy awoke in the middle of the night and wandered outside in the cold crying because he was scared after not being able to find his mom and dad, according to authorities.

His cries awoke neighbors who found him outside in his pajamas. The neighbors went to the boy's home and found the door wide open and his 2-year-old brother standing at the top of the stairs crying, according to a Monroe County sheriff's deputies' report. Neither parent was there.

Deputies arrived and found the two youngsters inside the neighbor's house. At the time the incident was reported — 1 a.m. Feb. 18 — the outside temperature was 15 degrees with a wind chill below zero. Snow was blowing.

A deputy searched the house and could not find anyone home. While the deputy was investigating the case, the parents pulled up in the driveway. The father, 34, was arrested on a charge of drunken driving.

They reportedly told deputies that they put the kids to bed about 9:15 p.m. and decided to celebrate Valentine's Day. They allegedly went to at least two bars in Toledo and returned about three hours later to find the police at their house.

Monroe County Prosecutor William P. Nichols said his office is looking into the possibility of filing charges. In the meantime, the **Department of Human Services** has become involved and has an active case open on the family, Mr. Nichols said.

The children are with the parents. On the night they were left home alone, they were sent to their grandparents' house to spend the night after the police arrived.

Although the father was arrested, their names are not being released because no criminal charges involving the children have been filed.

March 17, 2006

# Man faces sex charges

## Joel DuFresne extradited from Florida

By CRAIG McCOOL

Record-Eagle staff writer

PETOSKEY - Racist or rapist? Police say Joel N. DuFresne is both.

Dufresne, 27, an Alanson man with ties to a white supremacist group, faces 20 sexual assault charges and a single extortion charge in Emmet County court. He was arraigned March 13 after being extradited recently from Florida, where he was arrested last month.

DuFresne is accused of subjecting his girlfriend to many "violent and perverse" sexual acts, in some cases causing injury, between June 2005 and February, when he fled to Florida with the alleged victim's child, according to court records.

Dufresne was arrested in a Jacksonville, Fla., suburb on Feb. 27.

Also in the court file are several printouts of Internet pages for an organization called "Skinheads of the Racial Holy War."

Included is white supremacist propaganda - "Join us in our fight my white brothers and sisters and save our race ..." - and lists as a contact person "Rev. Joel," with a Petoskey P.O. box mailing address.

Briolat said police are confident Rev. Joel and Joel DuFresne are the same person, but downplayed the connection to any racist groups because media attention "is what (DuFresne) would want."

Briolat said police could draw no direct link between the racist group and alleged crimes and said information was included in the court file "as general background" about DuFresne and "what he could be capable of."

Of the 20 sex assault charges, nine are first-degree criminal sexual conduct charges that carry a maximum possible sentence of life in prison. The rest are third-degree, a 15-year felony.

The extortion charge involves the victim's daughter - Briolat indicated DuFresne fathered the child, though court records refer only to "the victim's daughter." Records show DuFresne is accused of kidnapping the child in order to "force her to commit a three-way sex act against her will."

DuFresne is in jail on \$500,000 bond. His preliminary examination is set for March 27.

Metro Detroit

## **BRIAN DICKERSON: Lansing trying to fix sex-offender registry**

March 17, 2006

BY BRIAN DICKERSON  
FREE PRESS COLUMNIST

Michigan's on-line sex-offender registry is a disaster in progress, ruining young lives even as it fails to protect the public from dangerous sexual predators.

This week, as a Bingham Farms attorney launched a new constitutional challenge to the registry in federal court, five state lawmakers took a tentative first step toward cleaning up the mess the Legislature made when it launched the registry in 1995.

A House subcommittee led by Rep. Mike Nofs, R-Battle Creek, is conducting the Legislature's first comprehensive examination of Michigan's 10-year-old registry, which lists the names, addresses and photographs of nearly 40,000 sex offenders.

The registry became available via a public Web site in 1999. The laudable goal was to alert communities to the proximity of predators who posed a continuing threat to children and others vulnerable to sexual assault. But the list of those required to register for 25 years has grown so unwieldy that Michigan State Police can no longer maintain its accuracy.

Michigan now spends countless law enforcement hours keeping track of thousands of petty offenders, including teenagers prosecuted for sexual contact with consenting peers, while sexual predators with more problematic criminal histories ignore their obligation to register. Many whose convictions have been expunged remain on the public Web site for decades, even when victims, prosecutors and judges agree they pose no threat to anyone.

Bingham Farms attorney Thomas Lazar filed a class action in U.S. District Court this month on behalf of eight men whose convictions for misdemeanor sexual offenses have been formally expunged by the courts.

In the eyes of the law, Lazar's clients have clean records. If they'd been prosecuted for murder or drug trafficking, we'd have no way of learning about their criminal pasts.

But all eight are required to register on Michigan's public sex offender registry for 25 years.

Lazar contends the registration requirement violates the plaintiffs' right to due process.

He's also asked U.S. District Judge Patrick Duggan to allow the plaintiffs to press their suit pseudonymously as John Doe I-VIII. It's bad enough that so many ex-offenders are pointlessly humiliated. Those listed on the registry for minor offenses complain that they and their families remain targets of harassment, vandalism and ostracism years after they've completed their probations.

But the waste of scarce law enforcement dollars is equally senseless. By scattering resources better concentrated on a dangerous minority of sex offenders, Michigan's registry has betrayed its original purpose, which was to protect children.

If Nofs and his colleagues conduct a meaningful review of the registry, they'll find plentiful evidence of the need for reform.



At the very least, legislators should exempt so-called Romeo-and-Juliet offenders from mandatory registration and provide an opportunity for other offenders to rebut the law's presumption that they pose a continuing threat.

Ten years of trial-and-error has spawned enough injustice, misery and waste. It's time the Legislature acknowledged the registry's structural flaws and got down to repairing them in earnest.

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March 16, 2006

## **LITTLE ROOM FOR ADJUSTMENT IN SEX OFFENDER LIST**

The House Judiciary Sex Offender Registry Act Subcommittee will spend the next few weeks reviewing the registry, who it collects and who it omits. But federal law will limit what changes can actually be made.

“The federal government has really tied our hands,” said subcommittee Chair Rep. Mike Nofs (R-Battle Creek). “If we deviate too much we lose the \$15 million (in federal grants).”

A presentation on the current state and federal registry acts showed that Michigan could adjust how it handles certain crimes committed by 17- and 18-year-olds as well as any convictions that are set aside. The state also can adjust what crimes are placed on the public list.

But officials with the Department of State Police and the Prosecuting Attorneys Association of Michigan said federal law otherwise specifies what crimes must be included on the state registry and for how long.

Mr. Nofs said one option in changing the law might be ensuring that those who must be on the list but pose less of a long-term danger are made aware of their options for being removed. “We truly are worried about people who would hurt or harm others. Some people belong on the list,” he said. “But we want to make sure that those people who truly need to be on here are on here and those who do not have an opportunity to get off.”

He also argued there could be ways to make the list more useful by making it more clear why a particular person is on the list.

Matt Bolger with the State Police said the department is working to move the list to a new server. “That would allow us a little more leeway,” he said, though adding the move is also coming at a cost.

The state also could see some of the federal strings fall away with the loss of federal funds. K.C. Steckelberg with the Prosecutors Association said the federal grants were cut for the current fiscal year and could be eliminated next fiscal year.

Mr. Nofs said at least the next two meetings of the subcommittee are planned for public testimony. “We want to hear all the problems or perceived problems, or the good things,” he said.

# Hospital Therapist Accused Of Molesting Comatose Children

## *Brain-Damaged Children Were Among Alleged Victims*

POSTED: 5:44 pm EST March 16, 2006

UPDATED: 6:13 pm EST March 16, 2006

SAN DIEGO -- Camera phones are now banned at the Children's Hospital and Health Center's convalescent unit. The curtains around patients must be left open most of the time. And administrators are considering installing security cameras in patients' rooms.

The precautions were prompted by one man: Wayne Albert Bleyle, a respiratory therapist accused of molesting brain-damaged, comatose boys and girls, taking cell-phone photos of himself in the act, and posting them on the Internet.

"This is the worst case of child molestation imaginable," prosecutor Laura Gunn said in court last week. "I don't know if we've ever seen a case like it before where the victims were so vulnerable."

Bleyle, 54, is in jail on \$5 million bail after pleading not guilty to two counts of child molestation and 24 counts of child pornography. But Gunn said Bleyle molested many more patients over the past decade, preying on the hospital's weakest of the weak, including youngsters who would never be able to speak.

Gunn said that when an investigator asked how many children he had abused, Bleyle replied: "How many snowflakes are there out there?"

Questions are swirling about how a trusted, 25-year employee could be accused of such horrific crimes - and at a hospital highly regarded for its ability to detect child abuse. Bleyle had no criminal record, and nothing was amiss in background checks conducted every two years as part of the state licensing process.

Bleyle has not spoken publicly since his arrest last week. His attorney, Michael Begovich, has declined to comment.

Police Chief William Lansdowne said the investigation began about three weeks ago after investigators got a tip about child pornography on the Internet.

Colleagues, some left almost speechless by the allegations, said Bleyle was an engaging, hardworking therapist who volunteered for extra shifts, reassured parents and served as a mentor to new hires. He was also known as overly talkative and was regarded as something of a know-it-all with a tendency to second-guess even doctors.

"He had an opinion about everything," said Pamela Dixon, director of the 59-bed convalescent center. "He would always have to add something, like he was expert. ... He liked to be in the limelight."

"You dreaded asking him about his vacation because he would talk to you for an hour about what he did," she said. "You could ask him what time it was, it would take you half an hour."

The Rev. John Breiding, who was director of pastoral care at the hospital, described Bleyle as a conscientious employee who was active in church and looked on as a leader. "People with less experience would go to him," he said.

Bleyle lived for years in the San Diego suburb of Santee with his wife, Dianne. A prosecutor said she recently ordered her husband out of the house; he was living in a trailer when he was arrested. Bleyle's wife did not answer her door on Saturday and did not respond to a message left there.

Curtains around patients' rooms can no longer be closed unless an invasive procedure is under way. In addition to banning all cell phones and looking into surveillance cameras, the hospital is also considering requiring the presence of two medical professionals during more procedures.

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## Arrest made in 2-year-old slaying case

### Osceola man nabbed in Clinton Township in connection with mother's death

PUBLISHED: March 17, 2006

By Amanda Lee  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

An Osceola County man wanted for more than two years in the death of his mother was arrested Wednesday in Clinton Township.

Dennis J. Dell'eva, who was living in the township, was picked up by the Macomb County Sheriff's Office and the County of Macomb Enforcement Team when he was returning to his apartment on Keystone Street. He was riding a bicycle at the time.

Macomb County Sheriff's Capt. Dave Teske said Osceola officials contacted the sheriff's office not long ago to say Dell'eva, 52, was believed to be residing in the area with his father.

Teske said officers soon realized the information they had been given wasn't entirely true, but they still managed to track him down.

Wednesday evening, not long before they were set to suspend their surveillance, sheriff's deputies got a lucky break when Dell'eva came into view.

"It was a good thing they stuck around for those few extra minutes," Teske said.

Dell'eva is expected to be charged with involuntary manslaughter and second degree vulnerable adult abuse in connection with the death of his 74-year-old mother, Estelle Dell'eva.

On Jan. 19, 2004, Osceola County paramedics were called to the Dell'eva home in Reed City, located along U.S. 131 between Big Rapids and Cadillac, where they found Estelle Dell'eva buried deep under blankets and trash.

The home, which was owned and maintained by her son, had no running water or heat and police say Ms. Dell'eva was malnourished, dehydrated and suffered from other complications relating to multiple, severe bedsores.

She died the next day and the medical examiner listed the manner of death as a homicide.

"I have literally looked at hundreds of homicides, but even for me, this is a gruesome case," said Michigan Attorney General Mike Cox in a statement. "Ms. Dell'eva's son cashed her Social Security checks, but not to take care of his mother; instead he made trips to the liquor store to buy whiskey and rent videos."

Since 2004, Dell'eva has been listed as wanted but missing in Osceola County. Teske said Dell'eva also had warrants out for his arrest in Sterling Heights and Oakland County on petty matters.

If convicted, Dell'eva could face up to 15 years in prison on the involuntary manslaughter charge and four years on the **vulnerable adult abuse** charge. If convicted of both, state officials say the sentences would run concurrently.

Dell'eva has already been transported to Osceola County where he is to be arraigned.

# **Cox: '...even for me this is a gruesome case'**

BY SALLY BARBER, CADILLAC NEWS

March 17, 2006

REED CITY - When paramedics responded to a call to the home of Estelle Dell'eva, she was found buried in layers of blankets and trash, stuck to the sofa, malnourished and dehydrated. Dell'eva died a day later after being transported to the hospital.

Those conditions drew the attention of State Attorney General Mike Cox. Cox announced the arrest of Dennis James Dell'eva, 52, of Clinton Township Thursday for involuntary manslaughter and second-degree vulnerable adult abuse in his mother's death.

"I have looked at hundreds of homicides, but even for me this is a gruesome case," Cox said.

"I'm saddened and outraged," he said. "I can't believe a human being could be abused and neglected like this by her own son."

Dennis Dell'eva was arrested at a trailer park in Macomb County and arraigned Thursday morning in 77th District Court. Dell'eva will be bound over for trial in the 49th Circuit Court. No bond was set.

Unemployed at the time, Dennis Dell'eva cashed his 74-year-old mother's Social Security checks, spending it on alcohol, food for himself and video rentals, Cox said at a press conference in Reed City. Cox called the press conference to announce the arrest and charges against Dennis Dell'eva.

The medical examiner listed the manner of Dell'eva's death as a homicide. Cox said he would not stand by and let elder abuse and neglect go unpunished.

"This case cries out for justice and justice will be served," he said.

The Dell'eva case could have statewide implications on how children care for their adult parents. Osceola County Prosecutor Sandra Marvin said the case has the potential to set precedent.

"Parents have a legal duty to take care of their children," she said. "Does a child have the legal duty to take care of their parents? That is the question."

Cox said the state is going to argue Dell'eva had a duty to take care of his mother.

Dell'eva's case came to the attorney general's attention a month ago when the Osceola County Sheriff's Department requested assistance from the state office.

"This has haunted our department for two years," said Sheriff James Crawford. "We tried to get this where we could get it prosecuted. It's time Mrs. Dell'eva received some justice. We need to let it be known in this county we take an interest and nobody should die in those circumstances."

Marvin said she welcomes the resources of the attorney general's office in resolving the case. Marvin hesitated from filing charges at the time of the Dell'eva's death because Protective Services had been involved with the situation.

"She refused services from Protective Services three months prior to her death," Marvin said. "That played into my decision."

Marvin said her decision as to whether or not to file criminal charges was deferred while she waited for the sheriff's department to provide information she requested. She said the information was never delivered.

"The bottom line is we feel it is a prosecutable case," Cox said. "We wouldn't let this happen to a horse or an animal."

Dell'eva will be represented by a court appointed attorney. A preliminary exam has been set for March 23. If convicted on the felony charges, he would face up to 15 years in prison and/or up to \$7,500 in fines for involuntary manslaughter and four years in prison and/or \$5,000 fine for vulnerable adult abuse, second degree.

The attorney general's office was involved in 2005 in the first-degree murder trial of Jennifer Marie Gottschalk in Osceola County's 77th District Court.

Friday, March 17, 2006

## **Poor can skip their co-pays Pharmacists cannot refuse to give Medicaid patients their medicine, U.S. judge rules.**

Paul Egan / The Detroit News

Michigan pharmacists can no longer refuse to fill prescriptions for poor people who say they can't afford a co-pay, a federal judge has ruled.

U.S. District Judge David Lawson's ruling is a victory for Jeanette Beeker of Saginaw and four other low-income Michigan residents who were lead plaintiffs in a class-action lawsuit against the state on behalf of nearly 1.5 million recipients of Medicaid -- the federal health program for the needy.

But a lawyer for the Michigan Pharmacists Association says the ruling could cause some of the state's roughly 2,800 pharmacies that serve Medicaid patients -- 95 percent of the state's pharmacies -- to opt out of the program.

"I'm not happy with it," said Jesse Vivian, the association's general counsel. "If I told you I was going to cut your salary in half this week, would you keep working?"

The state, which appealed the ruling this week to the U.S. Court of Appeals, is notifying pharmacists about the ruling, Department of Community Health spokesman T.J. Bucholz said.

On March 7, Lawson rejected an emergency request by the state to stay the ruling.

Typically, pharmacists charge Medicaid recipients age 21 or older a co-pay of \$1 for generic drug prescriptions and \$3 for name-brand drugs. Under the state policy that existed until Lawson issued his recent ruling, pharmacists were required to fill prescriptions for Medicaid patients the first time they couldn't cover a co-pay, but could refuse to fill future prescriptions.

Now, "if they tell their pharmacists that they aren't able to pay, they will still be able to get their medicines," said Jacqueline Doig, senior staff attorney for the Center for Civil Justice that filed the lawsuit last year.

"They cannot be denied."

Doig said although the amounts of the co-pays appear small, many Medicaid recipients have multiple prescriptions that must be refilled frequently. Lacking the cash for co-pays causes poor people to postpone their medications, which can lead to more serious health complications, she said.

"That costs all of us."

Beeker, 66, had an annual income of about \$7,300 and took nine prescription drugs for arthritis, hypertension and other problems, according to court records.

Vivian said the ruling by the Bay City judge could have a significant impact on certain pharmacists serving low-income areas.

"We're not talking about \$1 or \$2," Vivian said. "I know pharmacists who have extremely large Medicaid clientele who have \$50,000 to \$75,000 in bad debt."

Such pharmacists can either swallow the cost of the co-pays or opt out of Medicaid, he said.

Sam Freedman, a pharmacist at S&A Prescription on Puritan Street in west Detroit, said Lawson's ruling would not cause him to opt out of Medicaid.

"If you were going to do that, you might as well just close up," Freedman said.



Most people pay their co-pays, he said. "If they don't have it, I usually let them go until they can pay it. I haven't had any problems."

Medicare, another federal health program that mostly serves the elderly, introduced a prescription drug benefit on Jan. 1. But Doig said Lawson's ruling directly affects at least 82,000 Michigan adults who are on Medicaid, do not have Medicare coverage, and are charged co-pays for all their prescription drugs.

A new federal law that takes effect March 31 specifically allows collection of co-pays from Medicaid and Medicare recipients.

But Doig said the new law may be unconstitutional and Vivian said it will not immediately nullify Lawson's ruling.

*You can reach Paul Egan at (313) 222-2069 or [pegan@detnews.com](mailto:pegan@detnews.com).*

**At issue**

More than 95 percent of pharmacies in Michigan accept Medicaid.

Nearly 1.5 million people in Michigan receive Medicaid.

Medicaid generally requires co-pays of \$1 or \$3 for eligible prescription drugs.

A federal judge in Bay City has ruled that pharmacies cannot refuse to fill Medicaid for nonpayment of co-pays.

## **Birth control decision aids Medicaid recipients, state**

The federal government's decision this month to allow Michigan to use Medicaid funds to provide birth control to uninsured women is right for several reasons.

The move means that up to 200,000 women will have greater control over when they have children. While contraception is not 100 percent effective, it will help many women to avoid unplanned pregnancies. Women who may not be in situations conducive to raising families will be able to delay getting pregnant until their lives are more stable.

In addition to providing birth control, the federal decision also will allow the state to offer education and prenatal and postnatal counseling, thus helping to ensure that both pregnant women and their infants get proper care as well as information about nutrition, development, etc. There are significant benefits for taxpayers as well. Michigan currently spends more than \$270 million a year in Medicaid funding to provide care for low-income women who have unplanned pregnancies. Officials estimate that using Medicaid funds to provide birth control will save the state a minimum of \$80 million annually in such costs.

Medicaid funds will not be used to pay for abortion or infertility services. Critics, however, cite the fact that birth control does not always succeed and say the decision will waste money that could be better utilized by providing health care for low-income women and their children.

But we see great benefit in using Medicaid funds to help make sure that all children are wanted. An unplanned pregnancy often creates both emotional and financial pressures. These not only can affect the health of a mother-to-be and the child she is carrying, but can result in that child being raised in a home where he or she really is not wanted. Such children often become the victims of abuse and/or neglect.

As Gov. Jennifer Granholm pointed out in a statement, "If all pregnancies were intended, the state would see significant reductions in infant mortality, child abuse, child neglect and abortion."

Declines in those statistics would translate into stronger and healthier families, and that is good for everyone in Michigan.

Originally published March 17, 2006

# Programs offer free dental work as alternative to Medicaid

Tony Lascari, Midland Daily News

03/14/2006

One local dentist sees volunteer work in the community as an alternative to participating in Medicaid dental plans.

Dr. John Carter said programs in Midland such as Adopt a Child's Smile provide dental work to people in need without having to deal with government red tape, which he said might be one reason the number of dentists accepting Medicaid has dropped to 15 percent in the state.

"I had a lot of problems -- basically the red tape involved with the paperwork and them not paying, so you wound up losing a lot of money," he said of the Medicaid program when he participated.

There also are volunteer dental care programs run through the Michigan Dental Association and the Helping Hands clinic, Carter said. He said the Adopt a Child's Smile program provides dental work to children in need, some of whom have no insurance.

"The dentist will contribute his time and then get reimbursed for the materials," he said. "I think it's great because it really does help a lot of kids. With the change in the economy, there are a lot of kids who fall through the cracks."

Don Carlsen, a retired local orthodontist, said the program is designed to serve patients. It provides basic dental work first, then orthodontic work -- including braces -- if funds allow it. He said about \$800 has been given per child toward costs that can reach several thousand dollars. He said the orthodontic work is important, especially to developing teens because having bad teeth can impact people's mental well being.

"If people feel good about themselves, then good things tend to happen," he said.

The program is funded by local organizations, including the Midland Rotary Club, and fundraising during events such as Parkapalooza in Sanford.

Carlsen said he is hoping to find donors to specifically support more orthodontic work since emergencies, toothaches and general dental work come first in the organization's general budget. He said people can contact Kathy Anderson through the Child Protection Council at (989) 835-9922 for more information about the program, or to contribute funds.

REPORT NO. --, VOLUME 35  
Michigan Report

March 16, 2006

## **WELLNESS BILLS HIT WALL OVER ‘ADVERSE’ AMENDMENT**

Two bills that would allow health insurance companies to offer discounts to companies whose workers participate in wellness programs hit the wall over provisions to ensure workers can't be punished for not participating in wellness programs, and final action on SB 848 and SB 849 was delayed in the Senate Thursday.

Four Republicans – Sen. Shirley Johnson (R-Troy), Sen. Jud Gilbert (R-Algonac), Sen. Bruce Patterson (R-Canton) and Sen. Laura Toy (R-Livonia) – joined a solid Democratic caucus in supporting an amendment that would prohibit a company from taking “adverse action” against an employee who refused to participate in a program.

Senate Minority Leader Bob Emerson (D-Flint) said it was great if companies wanted to reward workers for engaging in wellness programs, but “we think it's outrageous that you could jeopardize someone's employment because they don't participate in something we think is a good idea.”

Sen. Tom George (R-Portage) said the amendment was overbroad. If companies offer some workers extra vacation time for participating in a wellness program and not to those who do not, was that an adverse action, he asked.

And Senate Majority Floor Leader Sen. Bev Hammerstrom (R-Temperance) said the amendment should be narrowed to specify only that a worker could not be fired if he or she does not participate.

(“The wall” is a phrase used by runners to describe a physical/psychological point where they feel they cannot keep running.)

Lansing State Journal

Letters

March 17, 2006

## **Truly support kids**

The so-called Christians who oppose all abortions do nothing for the children and mothers after birth. The states with the most restrictions on abortion spend the least to support the health and welfare of children once they leave the protection of the womb.

These so-called Christians would rather spend their time and money taking rights away from women. They do not promise the unborn a future that is safe, healthy, warm and protected. These people do not have to take care of these children or want anything to do with them once they are born.

Until Christians support a constitutional amendment for health care for all people under 18 years of age, and those who are taking care of these children, they ("Christians") are not what they pretend to be - caring.

Paul Baribeau  
Grand Ledge

# Congress approves an extra \$1B for low-income energy assistance

3/16/2006, 8:26 p.m. ET

By JIM ABRAMS  
The Associated Press

WASHINGTON (AP) — Federal aid to help the poor cope with energy costs will increase by \$1 billion to more than \$3 billion this year under legislation approved Thursday.

The House approved the proposal by a 287-128 vote, sending the measure to President Bush. He is expected to sign it. The House vote came a week after the Senate approved the additional money for the Low Income Home Energy Assistance Program.

Proponents of the new spending, led by Sen. Olympia Snowe, R-Maine, say the program's budget fails to meet the needs of the poor, especially given soaring heating and cooling costs. It took months to get the legislation through Congress, in part because of resistance from fiscal conservatives opposed to new spending and from lawmakers from warm weather states who contend that the program favors cold weather regions.

"It's been a long and difficult road, but today marks a great victory for many families in Maine and across the country who are struggling to keep warm," Snowe said in a statement.

In Michigan, winter energy costs have increased by an average of 37 percent, according to the governor's office. In early winter, the state estimated that its applications for heating assistance would increase by nearly 40,000 households.

The current budget would have left Michigan's program with a shortfall of about \$65 million. The funding approved by the House could provide about \$25 million in more funding.

"It is unfortunate that funding for LIHEAP has remained constant over the years while heating costs have soared," said Rep. John Dingell, D-Dearborn. "Even with these new funds, many families will have a hard time paying their heating bills this winter."

Snowe noted that while the program's spending has remained relatively flat in recent years, the average household heating oil expenditure has more than doubled to \$1,474 since 2001, and natural gas costs have gone from \$465 to \$1,000.

She said the program's buying power for a household's annual heating oil cost has gone from 50 percent to 19 percent in that period.

Local News

March 17, 2006

## **Police: Man hit, strangled wife**

FROM TRAVERSE CITY RECORD EAGLE STAFF REPORTS

TRAVERSE CITY - A local man is accused of allegedly strangling his wife until she passed out at the couple's Traverse City home.

Tahca Mahpiya-Takiya Milk, 22, is charged with assault with intent to do harm less than murder, a 10-year felony, stemming from an incident on March 8.

City police said Milk allegedly punched and pushed his wife to the floor and strangled her until she lost consciousness, according to 86th District Court records.

Milk is also charged with one-year misdemeanor counts of domestic violence and aggravated assault.

Milk is being held in the Grand Traverse County Jail on \$10,000 bond.

Macomb County

## **Lenox Twp. man on trial**

### **He is charged in girlfriend's death**

March 17, 2006

BY JOHN MASSON  
FREE PRESS STAFF WRITER

A trial began Thursday for a 42-year-old man charged with second-degree murder in the death of his live-in girlfriend.

Assistant Macomb County Prosecutor William Dailey told jurors that Ronald J. Drolshagen of Lenox Township killed Kelly A. Ireland on Jan. 8, 2005, at the end of an argument that smoldered through much of the evening.

The case is being heard in Macomb County Circuit Court in Mt. Clemens.

While Dailey acknowledged that Ireland, 39, struggled with alcoholism, he reminded jurors that no one should die as the victim of domestic violence.

"She's a mother, she's a sister, she's a daughter," he said. "She had problems in her life ... but she was a person, and she was loved."

One of the people who loved her, according to defense attorney Stephen Rabaut, was Drolshagen.

"Ronald Drolshagen loved Kelly, and he was concerned about her," Rabaut said. "But this matter isn't about using good judgment."

Both sides agreed that a severed artery in Ireland's neck caused her to bleed to death internally.

But they didn't agree on how or when that injury -- and many others -- occurred.

According to several statements Drolshagen made, the problems started after he woke up about 7:30 p.m. from a nap after he arrived home from his construction job, Dailey told jurors. Ireland arrived home a short time later and started drinking vodka. An argument developed, Dailey said, and Drolshagen dumped the remaining vodka down the sink.

But later, Drolshagen decided to drive Ireland to a bar, Dailey said, and the couple argued again later, when Drolshagen decided it was time to go home.

He left her at the bar, went home and went to bed. About 3 a.m., Dailey said, Drolshagen told police he woke up and saw a Ford pickup outside. Ireland had gotten a ride home from another patron at the bar.

"Kelly and this man were kissing" inside the truck, Dailey said, but Drolshagen went back to bed. Then, about 4 a.m., he told police, he woke up, found Ireland lying passed out on the floor, and put her to bed.

Drolshagen told detectives in at least one statement that he and Ireland had consensual sex before they went to sleep.

Then, when he awoke about 9:30 a.m., Drolshagen found that Ireland wasn't breathing and her skin was cold to the touch.

Dailey also addressed a piece of evidence that surfaced earlier and caused a lengthy delay in the trial. A spot was found on Ireland's right hand that contained her blood and the blood of another



man. The blood didn't come from Drolshagen -- and it didn't come from the man in the pickup who drove Ireland home.

Dailey urged jurors not to read too much into the blood spot. "Does it matter if at the bar she touched someone else" and got a speck of blood on her hand, he asked rhetorically. "Does it help prove anything in the case?"

Both sides likely will revisit that issue when the trial resumes today.

Contact **JOHN MASSON** at 586-469-4904 or [masson@freepress.com](mailto:masson@freepress.com).

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

March 16, 2006

Contact: Heidi Watson

517-335-6397

## **Governor Granholm Makes Appointments to Long-Term Care Task Force**

LANSING - Governor Jennifer M. Granholm today announced the following appointments to the state's Michigan Long-Term Care Supports and Services Advisory Commission:

Christine M. Chesny of Bay City, president of MidMichigan Visiting Nurse Association. Ms. Chesny is appointed to represent providers of Medicaid-funded long-term care supports and services for a term expiring December 31, 2008.

Linda K. Ewing of Grosse Pointe, research director for the International Union UAW. Ms. Ewing is appointed to represent the general public for a term expiring December 31, 2009.

Andrew A. Farmer of Lansing, association state director for health and supportive services with AARP Michigan. Mr. Farmer is appointed to represent primary or secondary consumers of long-term care supports and services for a term expiring December 31, 2009.

The Michigan Long-Term Care Supports and Services Advisory Commission will assist in the development and implementation of policy and strategies of the Medicaid Long-Term Care Task Force recommendations.

These appointments are not subject to disapproval.

# # #

# Chesny named to state panel

Midland Daily News

03/17/2006

Gov. Jennifer M. Granholm appointed Christine M. Chesny of Bay City to the Michigan Long-Term Care Supports and Services Advisory Commission.

Chesny, president of MidMichigan Visiting Nurse Association, was appointed to represent providers of Medicaid-funded long-term care supports and services.

The commission is to help in development and implementation of policy and strategies of the Medicaid Long-Term Care Task Force recommendations.

The term expires Dec. 31, 2008.

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# Tax credit meetings set to help low-income families

By Tom Willard

Royal Oak Daily Tribune Staff Writer

PUBLISHED: March 17, 2006

Each year, millions of dollars in available tax credits go unclaimed by households that need them the most, according to the IRS.

A federal earned income tax credit allows eligible low-income workers and families to substantially reduce — or, in some cases, eliminate — the amount of federal taxes they must pay.

In 2005, more than 22 million Americans claimed the credit for a total of return of \$38 billion. The previous year, a total of \$71 million in earned income credits went to nearly 50,000 residents in Oakland County alone, according to the IRS.

An estimated 20-25 percent of all eligible workers nationwide do not take advantage of the benefit, however. More than a third of Michigan's eligible taxpayers did not file for the credit in 2003, leaving \$214 million in potential credits unclaimed.

"The biggest reason is that a lot of people just don't know they're eligible for it," said Luis D. Garcia, a spokesman for the IRS in Michigan. "You don't know this money is here if you don't ask. It's well worth it."

With the April 17 federal income tax filing deadline approaching, Democrats from the Michigan House of Representatives are holding a series of town hall meetings designed to help low-income families claim the credit.

The non-partisan Michigan Statewide Earned Income Tax Coalition will have experts from various organizations including the United Way, Michigan Works! Association and Michigan State University Extension at the meetings, one of which will be held at 6 p.m. March 20 at the Madison Heights Fire Department headquarters station, 13 Mile and John R roads.

The earned income credit "is a great tool for low- and middle-income families" that may be struggling to make ends meet, said Rep. Marie Donigan, D-Royal Oak.

"People earn this money and it's available for them to get back, and when people get money back, they spend it locally," she said. "It's just good for families."

Congress established the refundable tax credit in 1975, partly as a means of offsetting the burden of Social Security taxes and providing an incentive to work.

Eligibility is based on a claimant's income and number of children.

An individual with two or more qualifying children must earn an adjusted gross income less than \$35,263 to qualify for a credit of up to \$4,400. Those with one child must earn less than \$31,030 to receive a credit of up to \$2,662; taxpayers ages 25-64 with no qualifying child must make less than \$11,750 for a credit of up to \$399.

Income limits are \$2,000 higher for those whose filing status is married, filing jointly.

Investment income must be \$2,700 or less for the year, according to the IRS.

Many moderate-income families are unaware they qualify for the credit, said Garcia, who noted the IRS Web site ([www.irs.gov](http://www.irs.gov)) features a program known as EITC Assistant that lets users calculate their income in order to determine if they are eligible.

Those who qualify can also get free tax preparation assistance and can file their federal return for free through the IRS Web site.

In addition to Monday's program in Madison Heights, House Democrats are also scheduled to hold town hall meetings in Flat Rock, Lansing, Port Huron and Sandusky.

The Associated Press contributed to this report.

Contact Tom Willard at [tom.willard@dailytribune.com](mailto:tom.willard@dailytribune.com) or 248-591-2564.

March 16, 2006

## **LAWMAKERS QUESTION D.H.S. WELFARE TO WORK STRATEGY**

In the face of possible federal sanctions that could cost the state more than \$100 million if at least 50 percent of Michigan's able welfare participants fail to go to work by October 1, members of a joint meeting of the House and Senate Human Services Appropriations Subcommittees fired some tough questions at department officials on Thursday, telling them that if they fail to meet federal standards they will have to answer to state residents for losing such a huge amount of money.

The new federal guidelines change the base year for calculating caseload reduction to 2006 from 1996, effectively wiping out credit that Michigan previously earned for its success at reducing its rolls by 60 percent from over a decade ago.

What this means, explained DHS official Don Mussen, is that the 22 percent rate of working recipient families no longer has a cushion from the credit, and therefore falls 28 percentage points below the federal guidelines.

The state stands to lose \$39 million in federal Temporary Assistance to Needy Family funds, while being required to increase state funds by as much as \$70 million, if 50 percent of welfare recipients aren't working by the beginning of FY 2006-07.

Mr. Mussen, acting director of Family Support Services for DHS, and department Director Marianne Udow outlined for lawmakers a rather lengthy report that outlines how the department plans to get more families working, including explaining the main strategy of creating a "pipeline" approach modeled after the state of Georgia and the J.E.T. (Jobs, education, training) program currently in the pilot process.

Rep. Bruce Caswell (R-Hillsdale) said that the DHS report seemed to outline a lot of pilot programs that the state couldn't afford to expand statewide and inserted a lot philosophically good ideas.

However, he added, all of the approaches don't explain how the state will avoid federal sanctions.

"What's going to be in place on October 1? Because, if it's not in place, your department is going to cost the state \$1 million. The fail and beg program didn't work for me when I was a teacher and it's not going to work for Michigan," Mr. Caswell said.

With Democrats remaining silent and Senators following the lead of Chair Sen. Bill Hardiman (R-Kentwood), the meeting was dominated by questions from House Republicans, probing DHS for statistics on who isn't working, how many of them could be and why aren't they now.

Mr. Mussen didn't have the information readily available but assured members he could address their questions later.

In the meantime, he focused on the current model the state plans to use, Georgia's approach, which netted that state a 58 percent increase in working families.

He explained that their improvements come from identifying the specific barriers to work that face each family and addressing them with training, education or community service, all of which count toward fulfilling the federal government's work requirement.

However, Mr. Caswell said, he thinks the No. 1 job of the state should be getting people to work and if that fails, it should go back to the drawing board.

Michigan has been focusing on a "work first" approach, said Mr. Mussen, and it hasn't allowed the state to make use of the range of activities that count as work under federal law.

Mr. Caswell said that just shifting people into community service jobs or education programs to better the numbers is "the easy fix."

"We need to do the hard work. People aren't getting encouraged to work; we've got to do more to give people their dignity back."

Mr. Mussen, who has met with officials from the Department of Labor and Economic Growth and other departments and has traveled around the country to research best practices that have worked for other states, said the state is actively implementing statewide projects that monitor efforts toward achieving this fall's goal.

He added that in September states will be required to submit a report to federal officials outlining how they plan to meet the federal requirements for work. That mandate is in addition to quarterly reports the state already sends to federal officials.

# Agency fair showcases local human services

## Information available on resources

Friday, March 17, 2006

From Ann Arbor News staff reports

The Livingston County United Way, the **Livingston County Department of Human Services** and Citizens Insurance Co. will host the fifth annual "In Our Own Backyard" Agency Fair coming up Tuesday. It will run 11 a.m.-3 p.m. at the Citizens Insurance building, 808 N. Highlander Way at the corner of M-59 in Howell.

There is no cost for admission and door prizes will be drawn throughout the day at the event, where the public can get information about local resources.

Among others, programs that will be showcased include senior day care, respite and hospice services, counseling, youth development and support programs and parenting assistance.

"This venue gives us a chance to strengthen the safety net of services provided to our area residents," said Nancy Rosso, executive director of the county's United Way.

In 2005, more than 50 area health and human services agencies and programs were showcased at the event.

Organizations interested in participating can sign up by calling Jeanette Freeland at the **Livingston County Department of Human Services** at 517-548-0207 or Tracy Dudansky at the Livingston County United Way, 810-494-3000. Call 810-494-3000 for general information about the fair.



# **County to create \$1.2 million youth treatment and rehabilitation center**

## **Move to save money by eliminating the need to send teens to private institutions**

PUBLISHED: March 17, 2006

By Chad Selweski  
Macomb Daily Staff Writer

County officials embark on a new path this month in the fight against juvenile crime, putting a greater emphasis on treatment of delinquent youths in local settings.

A county Board of Commissioners committee has approved a \$1.2 million plan to create a treatment and rehabilitation center on the second floor of the Juvenile Justice Center. The site will offer 40 beds and will be staffed by 14 "youth specialists," two therapists and two shift supervisors.

Charles Seidelman, JJC director, said the move will curtail the practice of sending youths to expensive private institutions as far away as Iowa and Pennsylvania, where prices range from \$150 to \$350 a day. The savings will average about \$100 per day, per child.

"We want to provide services for delinquent youths right here at home," Seidelman said. "We want to provide these things locally in the community, at a significantly lower cost, and ... have the parent there, reinforcing that parent-child bond."

The long-term plan calls for 110 beds for treatment, once the renovation of the old youth home -- Phase II of the JJC -- is completed in 2007. That 60,000-square-foot building, once plagued by a leaky roof and a host of structural problems, is being converted into a dormitory-style facility.

The two adjacent buildings, which will be attached, are located in the county's Elizabeth Road complex on the outskirts of Mount Clemens. Once the project is completed, a majority of the JJC's 190 beds will provide treatment rather than a basic detention atmosphere.

Nicole DeJong, program director for the Juvenile Court, said the rehabilitation of youths is hampered when kids are sent away and separated from their families. DeJong said juveniles who need treatment include sex offenders and those dealing with substance abuse.

"For some, it's just repeated delinquent behavior, not following the rules at home, not attending school," she said.

The county spends more than \$12 million a year on private child care institutions. The plan calls for paring that amount down substantially by nearly eliminating the dispatch of kids to outside agencies. Mental health treatment is another category where efforts will focus on treating youths locally with the help of the county Community Health Department.

The \$1.2 million expansion faces final approval from the full Board of Commissioners on March 23.

But building construction issues still must be addressed. A temporary second-floor fire escape must be added to the JJC, and training of the 18 new staffers will commence once they're hired. The new treatment center should open in July or August.

Construction came to a halt on the old youth home several months ago and is expected to resume this spring. The added emphasis on treatment required a \$2.3 million mid-course correction in the design plans for the Phase II project, which is now slated for approval in Spring 2007.

## Early childhood summit

*By JOHN EBY / Dowagiac Daily News  
Thursday, March 16, 2006 10:33 AM EST*

When a tornado ripped through Cass County, a school principal made a referral about a family whose mobile home was dislodged.

The children went to school at their grandparents' in central Indiana while the parents stayed with friends so they could continue working.

"We found that they had used all of their funds that they had laid back," Peggy Pompey, Zero to Five coordinator, told Wednesday's Early Childhood Summit at Southwestern Michigan College, "to get that trailer put back on its foundation. Now they needed an electrician to check all the connections before they turned power back on, but they didn't have the money for it."

Zero to Five, which served more than 1,500 families and more than 2,100 children since the school readiness program began in 2000-01, located a retired electrician to check for sparks and shorts.

Then the family learned that the damage cracked their toilet.

The principal ordered a toilet at cost through a plumber friend.

They went out and installed it while a Zero to Five identified a source to pay for the stool.

Approximately 1,300 of these families received home visits.

Zero to Five currently serves 191 families with 272 children. It also provides direct services for 15 Early On families.

Zero to Five's seven parent educators have made approximately 4,000 home visits to Cass County families, with an average of 23 home visits per worker each month and an average of at least one home visit to each family per month.

More than half the families enrolled in Zero to Five live in poverty. Approximately 400 families have been referred to one or more community programs/agencies for services. Zero to Five also employs a nurse, who has provided health screens to 76 families with infants and 200 home visits.

Approximately 300 families have attended parents groups or groups that promote social interaction among children.

The program has completed more than 1,100 screens (600 developmental and 500 for hearing and/or vision) for early detection of any delay. Approximately 50 referrals have been made for further hearing and vision evaluation.

It costs, on average, \$41,452 for a Zero to Five worker with health insurance through the LCISD, \$28,762 without; \$16,558 for the part-time Family Resource Center coordinator with health insurance, \$10,903 without.

"Sometimes a family just wants information," Pompey said. "A list of local landlords, apartment housing, a place to get emergency food or where they can take their children to interact with others at social events."

“Or, sometimes they feel like they have a problem. Maybe they have anger management issues. They just don't have anyplace else to turn, so they turn to Zero to Five. It's a real broad spectrum and we address issues as they come. There's no written list that says what we can and can't do.”

Pompey's colleague, Lori Phillips, talked about Zero to Five's assessment tool and the parents-as-teachers curriculum.

“We talk to them about child development and offer tips on ways to encourage learning, manage challenging behaviors and promote a strong parent-child relationship. When you talk about what they're interested in, a lot of them say, ‘I just want my child to do really well in school. It's important to me,’ ” Phillips related. “All parents will be their child's first and best teacher. We try to encourage them and emphasize that kids are born learners. You as the parent are the expert on your own child. All families have strengths we try to build on. Problems we try to work on together and come up with a plan - just to be there as a support and coordinate resources, not to completely take care of it.”

Plans developed during home visits divide into three parts, Phillips said.

“There's a main parent-child activity that focuses on age-appropriate development. A lot are pretty simple and things parents are already doing. We just help show them what they're doing well and model and explain what developmental things are taking place. There's also a book-sharing activity related to the main activity for that age. There's follow-up activity where you encourage your parents to talk about things they learned from you during the next coming month. Building rapport is very important because if families are having financial problems or have nowhere to live, they can't really focus on what's best for their child until some of those things are taken care of first,” Phillips said. “At group meetings families like to share their experiences and see what other families are doing.”

Phillips said Zero to Five uses an “Ages and Stages” developmental questionnaire for screening. Those domains are gross motor, fine motor, communication, problem-solving and personal social skills, with an age range of 4 months to 5 years old.

“We do this with the parent and child at the home visit,” she said. “Doing it all together opens the lines of communication between the parent and worker regarding child development. It gives you an idea what their thoughts are and something to work with. The screening provides a structure to express growth or concerns in a child's development. If, for instance, there was a concern or delay, we would make referrals to an appropriate agency for further evaluation and services.”

For example, Phillips said, one parent was interested in development screenings and the parenting curriculum. “At the time she had two children,” ages 23 months and 5 months. Both kids exhibited communication delays.

“We decided to make a referral to our Zero to Five nurse, who does hearing and vision screens,” Phillips said, “just to rule out a hearing problem. The older child was fine, but the baby, if it wasn't in her vision she wasn't hearing sounds. We made a referral to the Early On team, which also has hearing and vision equipment and a little bit further evaluation and testing.”

The family was subsequently referred to the Berrien County hearing impaired program in Berrien Springs. The older child needed speech services available at Lewis Cass Intermediate School District's Brookside Learning Center near Cassopolis. “She completed one school year and has now progressed to where she didn't qualify, which is a good thing. She goes to preschool now. The baby's hearing problems were due to fluid. She continues to be monitored,” Phillips said. “That just kind of points out that early intervention can take care of those problems.”

Cass County Human Services Coordinating Council (HSCC) began supporting Building Strong Families, a parent education program provided by Michigan State Extension, in 1996 through the Strong Families/Safe Children block grant. Building Strong Families is an eight-week curriculum delivered by an educator in the family's home, serving 25 to 30 families per year.

In 1998, the HSCC teamed with Cass/Van Buren Public Health Department on a Healthy Families grant, which created strong partnerships between health care providers and home visitors.

In 2000, Lewis Cass ISD was awarded the All Students Achieve Program-Parent Involvement in Education (ASAP-PIE) grant and partnered with the HSCC to create the 0-5 community plan and 0-5 work group.

The 0-5 work group consists of agencies serving that population and their families, including WIC, Tri-County Head Start, the state Department of Human Services, Pokagon Head Start, Early On, Cass District Library and MSU Extension.

The Family Resource Center was conceived in 2000 and came into existence in 2002 with the Safe School Healthy Student Initiative, which provides free information and referral to any Cass County families upon request.

In 2002, HSCC partnered with the LCISD to write a three-year federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative grant, which added mental health, substance abuse and law enforcement to the mix of early childhood partners.

Asset-building was adopted as Cass County's primary prevention strategy.

A work group of asset-builders began linking social workers in all school districts.

Gov. Jennifer Granholm launched Project Great Start in Michigan in 2004 to coordinate public and private resources to achieve common objectives and measurable results for the state's youngest children.

Local Great Start goals include: affordable, developmentally appropriate child care options for well and sick kids, including those with special needs, are available to families; children arriving in kindergarten ready to succeed; families having outside resources; learning partnerships between schools, parents and children are in place; parents having knowledge of parenting skills and child development; communities being responsive to the needs of young children and families and collaborating successfully.

On June 30, 2006, the main funding source for the 0-5 program/FRC ends.

The grants remaining will be the state's Great Parents, Great Start, which funds one part-time person through the LCISD, and the Strong Families/Safe Children block grant which supports that program.

So the HSCC's goal with the March 15 summit was to identify local stakeholders willing to invest in early childhood support.



JENNIFER M. GRANHOLM  
GOVERNOR

STATE OF MICHIGAN  
MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES  
LANSING



MARIANNE UDOW  
DIRECTOR

## News Release

Contact: Stepheni Schlinker or Maureen Sorbet (517) 373-7394

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### **Kent County collaborative receives \$60,000 Great Start Collaborative grant**

*Early Childhood Investment Corporation grants focus on early childhood development and care*

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**March 17, 2006**

GRAND RAPIDS – Today the superintendent of the Kent ISD joined board members of the Early Childhood Investment Corporation (ECIC) and local legislators to celebrate a \$60,000 grant to support a local Great Start Collaborative that will strengthen early childhood development and care in Kent County.

Michigan Department of Human Services director Marianne Udow and ECIC chief operating officer Mike Foley presented a ceremonial check to Mike Weiler, Kent ISD Superintendent.

From the day she took office, Governor Jennifer M. Granholm has maintained that early childhood development and care is a critical investment in the economic viability of the state.

"Children learn more from birth to age three than at any other time, setting the stage for future success in school and in life," Granholm said. "High-quality early childhood development and care is a wise investment in our children and our economy."

The Early Childhood Investment Corporation, which the Governor announced in her 2005 State of the State address, is developing the framework for effective early childhood development and care programs through partnerships with local collaboratives around the state. The local Great Start Collaboratives will use the grant money from the ECIC to conduct a community assessment and develop a strategic plan for the development of a comprehensive system of early childhood services and supports, accessible to all children from birth to kindergarten and their families.

"These grants will help bring together the public and private sectors, including government, business, civic, faith, education, and community groups to develop a long-standing, sustained focus on early learning and childhood development," said Mike Foley. "The board was able to award this first round of grants with the resources currently available, and is committed to funding Great Start Collaboratives throughout the state as new funding sources are identified."

Intermediate school districts will act as fiduciaries for the grants. In addition to Kent ISD, 13 other ISDs and RESAs around the state were also awarded funding for planning and/or implementation of Great Start Collaboratives.

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"Children who participate in high-quality early childhood development programs are better prepared to enter elementary school, are more likely to pursue secondary education and have lower dropout rates and higher high school graduation rates," DHS Director Marianne Udow said. "By improving the skills of a large fraction of the workforce, these programs for poor children will reduce poverty and strengthen the state's ability to compete in the global market."

For more information about the ECIC and Great Start collaboratives, visit the Project Great Start Web site at [www.michigan.gov/greatstart](http://www.michigan.gov/greatstart)

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